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PINR, AMGT, TF, ECON, EINV, PGOV, SOCI, AMED, BU  
SUBJECT: BULGARIA H1N1 UPDATE

REF: A. STATE 044165  
[B. STATE 045833](#)

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Summary: The Ministry of Health announced Bulgaria's first A/H1N1 death on September 30. A total of 78 Bulgarians have contracted the virus thus far. Bulgaria will join the European Union's initiative to buy vaccines and inoculate risk groups free of charge. Last updated in March 2008, Bulgaria's National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan is based on EU and WHO recommendations. End summary.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Bulgaria's first recorded death as a result of the A/H1N1 virus occurred September 30. The patient was a 30-year old male who first showed flu-like symptoms on September 19. He was admitted to a local hospital on September 23, where he was found to be suffering from bilateral pneumonia. The patient was transferred on September 25 to Lozenets University Hospital for Active Treatment. According to Dr. Lyubomir Spassov, Director of the Lozenets Hospital, the man was a drug addict, a factor that contributed to the lethal outcome. According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Health, a total of 78 Bulgarians have contracted the virus thus far.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Bulgaria has a National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan ("the Plan"), which was last updated in March 2008. The Plan was prepared in accordance with the EU and WHO's Global Program for Influenza Surveillance and Control, and is based on the current capacity of the Bulgarian healthcare system. The Plan will be updated and evaluated periodically. The Plan has two goals. The first is to organize comprehensive and timely action to limit and subsequently reduce the morbidity rate of pandemic influenza; ensure the optimal settings for treatment of infected people; maintain the functionality of vital public sectors and services, such as healthcare, security, transport, etc.; and ensure permanent, reliable and up-to-date public information on the influenza pandemic developments and the measures applied. The second goal is to improve the existing system for monitoring and control of seasonal influenza epidemics in parallel with the country's preparation for possible pandemics, thus achieving significant reduction in morbidity, mortality and losses from influenza epidemics in Bulgaria.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) The Plan calls for strengthening influenza surveillance, implementing a strategy for providing the country with vaccines and antiviral drugs in pandemic situations, intensifying antivirus preparations, including vaccinations, during the periods between pandemics; increasing national reserves of antiviral drugs; and further researching influenza epidemiology and prevention. Bulgaria will support the EU common policy on A/H1N1 and will buy vaccines and inoculate risk groups free of charge. Together

with other EU member states, Bulgaria is expected to open a public procurement procedure for the purchase of the vaccine by the end of the year.

15. (SBU) Comment. Bulgaria's National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan is still applicable and appropriate to the A/H1N1 flu pandemic, though its latest version is a bit dated. The Plan has been written so that it can respond and adapt to changing conditions as necessary. Experts agree the Plan looks good on paper, but we will monitor whether the healthcare system has the financial, logistical, and administrative capacity to manage its practical implementation. End comment.

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